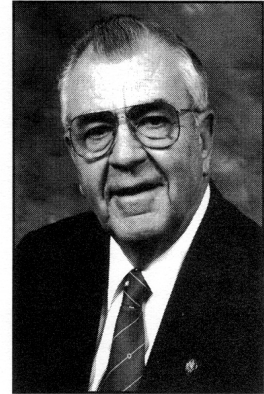


News

Congressman Herbert H. Bateman
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OPENING STATEMENT
THE HONORABLE HERBERT H. BATEMAN
MILITARY READINESS SUBCOMMITTEE
AND CIVIL SERVICE SUBCOMMITTEE
JOINT HEARING

CIVILIAN PERSONNEL READINESS

Our colleagues from the Civil Service Subcommittee of the Government Reform Committee join us today for the first combined hearing in my memory. I welcome the members of this subcommittee as partners in our efforts to oversee the Department of Defense's management of its civilian personnel workforce. I recognize that many of the civilian personnel provisions we include each year in our Defense Authorization Bill come within the jurisdiction of the Civil Service Subcommittee, and you have always been most cooperative and generous. The joint hearing provides our witnesses a unique opportunity to discuss issues before both committees of jurisdiction.

One of the primary reasons we scheduled this hearing is to discuss the effect of the civilian drawdown on DOD's civilian workforce and ultimately, on the readiness of our military forces. Few Americans understand that the Department of Defense has reduced its civilian workforce by more than 38 per cent over the last ten years, compared with a 35 percent reduction in active duty military forces. Many, many skilled workers across the country and overseas have left Department of Defense employment permanently.

I am also concerned that these rather dramatic reductions have occurred in such a way that the Department released needed personnel who possessed essential skills. It is now time to examine our civilian work force to ensure we will have the people with the skills we need in the future.

In that regard, I would like our witnesses to provide the subcommittees an assessment of their current skills inventory, and what additional tools they may need, if any, to properly align the workforce of their respective service. Additionally, I would like some assurances that the Department of Defense and the

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military services have planned for the future. In other words, do they have a template for the skills and workers needed to support future operations so that younger workers can begin to be hired and trained now to meet those future needs? If you do not have a clear vision of where you need to go, it is difficult for this committee to intelligently address issues and implement solutions.

In addition, we continue to hear concerns about the Department's aging workforce as an increasing number of workers are eligible to retire. The question is, will you need their skills when they do retire and do you have someone in the pipeline to fill those essential positions? I would expect that some very careful analysis has been done before you ask our two subcommittees to consider measures changing long established personnel policies to solve a problem that so far, has not been proven to my satisfaction.

Finally, over the years, the Department has requested and received authority to operate a variety of civilian personnel demonstration projects. I would like to hear what has been learned from the existing demonstrations. From the reactions we get back home when base closures are considered or reductions in force are announced, it is apparent that federal jobs are still highly coveted. Therefore, it seems counterintuitive that we would have difficulty hiring new workers. That is why I would like to see some careful analysis behind any request for new authorities, and I would insist that any new authorities be carefully targeted at skills the Department has demonstrated that it cannot hire. For example, the Air Force reports having difficulty hiring engineers. The Army has a different experience. Why is that?

Today, the subcommittees will hear testimony from experts in workforce shaping issues and from the civilian personnel policy directors of the Department. It is my belief that our hearing today will assist us in making the necessary decisions for our civilian workforce in the future.

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